chopped fibres in the range of from 95:5% to 5:95% by weight of the mixture respectively.

5. (Amended) A substrate according to claim 4, wherein the amorphous silica fibres comprise a mixture of both microfibres and chopped fibres in the range of from 70:30% to 30:70% by weight of the mixture respectively.

6. (Amended) A substrate according to [any preceding] claim 1, wherein the fibres have a diameter in the range of from 0.1μm to 50μm.

7. (Amended) A substrate according to claim 6, wherein the fibres have a diameter in the range of 0.4μm to 9μm.

8. (Amended) A substrate according to [any preceding] claim 1, wherein the binder comprises a solution or dispersion of ion-exchange polymeric materials, non-ion-conducting polymers, or inorganic materials or mixtures thereof.

9. (Amended) A substrate according to [any preceding] claim 1 for use in the preparation of a composite membrane.

10. (Amended) A composite membrane comprising a porous substrate of fibres and at least one ion-conducting polymer, characterised in that the substrate [is one according to any preceding claim, which] comprises a porous matrix of mixed amorphous silica fibres bound with a binder.

11. (Amended) A composite membrane according to claim 10, which when [tested by the method described herein in the Examples, results in] dried then boiled in water undergoes less than or equal to about ±9% change in the area.

12. (Amended) A composite membrane according to claim 10, [or claim 11] wherein the total thickness of the membrane is less that 200μm.

13. (Amended) A composite membrane according to [any one of claims] claim 10 [to 12] for use in a fuel cell.

14. (Amended) A process for the manufacture of a substrate [according to any one of claims 1 to 9], [which process comprises] comprising the steps of

(a) dispersing [the] mixed amorphous silica fibres in water to form a slurry;

(b) depositing the slurry onto a mesh bed to form a network;

(c) drying and compacting the fibre network; and

(d) applying, before or after step (c), a dispersion of binder.

15. (Amended) A process for the manufacture of a membrane [according to any one of claims 10 to 13], [which process comprises] comprising the steps of

(i) forming a porous substrate [of, preferably randomly orientated individual mixed amorphous silica fibres bound with a binder by a process] according to claim 14; and thereafter,

(ii) impregnating the porous substrate with a polymeric material to produce a membrane.

17. (Amended) A membrane electrode assembly comprising [a substrate according to any one of claim 1 to 9 and/or] a composite membrane according to [any one of claims] claim 10 [to 13].

18. (Amended) A fuel cell comprising [a substrate according to any one of claim 1 to 9 and/or] a composite membrane according to [any one of claims] claim 10 [to 13].

Claim 19 has been added.